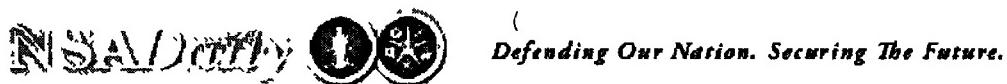


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(U) History Today - 23 July 2014

Run Date: 07/23/2014

(U) U.S. forces during the Vietnam War unfortunately tended to underestimate the technical capabilities of the enemy forces. This led to carelessness in the use of communications. All too many radio messages from American or South Vietnamese units were sent in plain language or using rudimentary, self-made cipher systems.

(U) Interrogation of enemy prisoners or defectors often revealed that their forces had highly proficient SIGINT capabilities. It often happened that the only limitation on the exploitation of U.S. radio messages was a lack of personnel who understood English.

(U) One "rallier," who defected in 1967 after ten years with the Viet Cong, told how his unit had gotten extremely accurate information about U.S. operations from their own intercept and from North Vietnamese intelligence reports that had obviously been based on COMINT.

(U) He claimed that in his ten years fighting, his unit had never been taken by surprise.

(U) One mark of the other side's proficiency was their ability to intrude successfully on U.S. communications nets. In one instance, at the U.S. air base in Da Nang, the Viet Cong used equipment at a captured guard post to send the American guard force to the opposite side of the base from where they intended to attack. Their subsequent attack caused millions of dollars in damage.

(U) At the American base at Pleiku, the Viet Cong imitated the voice of a guard sergeant with a Hispanic accent, said that they were preparing hot food, and asked for the number of troops in each bunker. Fortunately, something went wrong with the communication and the deception was recognized.

(U) A redacted version of this book is available on the NSA website on the worldwide web, and mirrored on NSAnet at:



(U) The photo of an enemy radioman was captured during the war. It is not clear whether he is working with his own communications or performing intercept.

(U) Discuss historical topics with interesting folks. Visit the Center for Cryptologic History's blog, [History Rocks](#) ("go history rocks").

(U) [Larger view of photo](#)

(U) Have a question or comment on "History Today"? Contact us at DL cch or [cch@nsa](mailto:cch@nsa).

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